

hangings." And this deals with drug trafficking which has prompted crimes. Let me read from this: "Many islands have witnessed rapid increases in murders and other violent crime over the past decade. Murders in Jamaica last year averaged 2.6 a day, twice the level of 10 years ago. Murders have doubled in Trinidad and Tobago over the past 5 years, with many of those linked to narcotics smuggling, say officials."

So they have a treatment, and the treatment really cuts down on recidivism, and that is hanging, which is being demanded by these nations that have also felt this scourge of illegal narcotics.

Mr. Speaker, I like to provide Members of Congress and the American people with little updates on what is going on in the war on drugs and how others from time to time approach this serious problem. Not that I recommend any of these procedures or remedies that I have reported here tonight. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their indulgence, and I will return again next week.

TITLE IX AND WOMEN'S SPORTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, one of the most exciting sporting events of all time took place in Pasadena's famed Rose Bowl. Over 90,000 spectators, a record attendance for a women's sports contest, saw the United States women's soccer team defeat China on penalty kicks. Many millions more around the world saw this thrilling match on television. In this country television ratings were higher than for the National Hockey League finals and most of the National Basketball Association playoffs.

I congratulate all the wonderful young women who participated, not just those from the victorious U.S. team but also the fine athletes from the Chinese squad and representatives from the other 14 nations that participated in this wonderful Women's World Cup. Marla Messing and Donna de Verona deserve everyone's gratitude for staging this magnificent tournament.

I would also like to praise ABC and ESPN for showing every match in its entirety, without commercial interruption, and live, except when two contests were being played at the same time.

The opportunity for the American public to see the action is something I have long fought for. When the American women's soccer team won the world championship in 1991 in China by defeating Norway 2 to 1, the final was only seen in this country by tape delay several weeks later. In contrast, the same match was shown live on two stations in Norway.

Consequently, I protested strongly when Americans were denied the right to see on television any of the soccer or women's softball matches in the 1996 Olympics. This was inexcusable, particularly since both American teams won the gold medal. I also objected at the poor treatment received by television viewers who wished to watch the U.S. men's and women's hockey teams at last year's winter Olympics. Since the U.S. Olympic committee is chartered by Congress, I am urging the House of Representatives' Committee on Government Reform, of which I am a member, to exert strong oversight so that the American public will receive better treatment at next year's Olympics. I know that Americans are anxious to see their beloved soccer team perform once more, and I am sure they will also enjoy our wonderful women's softball athletes when they get the opportunity to see them in action.

I think it is important to call attention to the important role that Title IX, enacted into law in 1972, played in preparing our women's team for the World Cup, and I congratulate my colleague, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) for having authored and enacted that law in this House.

Prior to the enactment of Title IX, female athletes in this country had limited chances to compete. I know when I was in school if I wished to be involved in athletics the only opportunity was to be a cheerleader. Donna de Verona, an Olympic gold medalist in swimming in the 1964 Olympics, was unable to obtain an athletic scholarship at an American University despite her considerable outstanding talent.

We must not heed those who complain that Title IX is responsible for the elimination of college men's baseball, wrestling and other so-called non-revenue sports teams. In fact, we must find ways of extending the philosophy of Title IX to other areas where women are discriminated against in the sports world. In this regard, I refer to professional sports.

In this respect, 27 years after the introduction of Title IX, women are drastically discriminated against in the professional sports world. As of now, the women who won the world championships for the United States in women's soccer have no opportunity to play as professionals in this country. On the other hand, the members of the men's soccer team that finished last in France at the Men's World Cup last year have ample opportunities to play professionally in the United States and abroad. I do not wish to demean our American men's soccer athletes. I am confident they will do much better at the next world cup.

I think it is important to point out that virtually all men's professional sports teams receive significant government assistance in the form of subsidies and substantial tax breaks for

whatever venue they play in. Many of the stadiums are actually constructed by municipal governments and either turned over to a team or leased at a very low rent. I believe that we must see that these facilities and tax breaks are available to women's professional teams on an equal basis.

□ 2130

THE DEBT AND THE DEFICIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HAYES). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about fiscal responsibility, the budget deficit and hopefully paying off the debt.

We have a very promising situation right now where we are finally headed towards balancing the budget. It was not too long ago when that seemed like an impossible dream. I remember in 1990 when we looked at budget deficits growing on a yearly basis, stacked on top of an already multi-trillion dollar debt, it seemed impossible to think that we would ever dig our way out of that hole, but thanks to a strong economy, the private sector kicking in and some good decisions made by both sides of the aisle and by President Clinton's administration, we are to the point where we almost have a yearly balanced budget. Now, we still have a \$5.6 trillion debt to deal with, but we are headed in the right direction, for the moment.

That is why I rise to speak this evening, because the "for the moment" part could change. As we head into the budget negotiations that are starting in earnest in both chambers and at the White House, we need to be very careful not to lose the progress that we have gained and not to, in essence, snatch defeat from the jaws of victory which we still have plenty of time to do.

I think there are a couple of ways this might happen. The first way is when we start throwing numbers around of the surplus. We have heard the numbers in the trillions of dollars about how much money we have got lying around. I want to try this evening to clarify exactly what we are talking about, because there are a number of variables in these numbers that often do not come with the rosy scenarios that various politicians are laying out for people to hear.

We have heard, for instance, that we have and will run up, as currently projected, \$6 trillion in surpluses over the course of the next 15 years. There are a number of problems with this scenario. First of all, of that \$6 trillion, better than half, almost, I think it is like \$3.1 trillion, will be ran up in the Social Security trust fund. Any surplus that we

have in the Social Security trust fund is not money that we can spend because it is money that we borrow from that trust fund with a promise to pay it back plus interest so that we can meet the obligations of the Social Security trust fund. If we were to take that money and treat it as a surplus and spend it, we would in essence—not in essence, we would—be spending money twice. That is exactly the sort of thing that got us in trouble in the 1980s. If you spend money twice, you wind up in debt because you do not have it when you need it.

So right away we lose half of that 15-year figure, better than half of that 15-year figure. You could still look at that and say, "Gosh, \$2.9 trillion over 15 years, that is still a lot of money." It is, but it presumes that our existing budget of all spending will be reduced by 20 percent. Not only will it not increase but we will make cuts of 20 percent. This was part of the 1997 balanced budget agreement that occurred before our economic situation got rosier and more money poured into the coffers. I do not want to be one to predict the future, but having been around this place for the last year or so and listening to people talk about all the various programs, from defense to education to you name it that people feel are underfunded, much less in need of a 20 percent cut, I find it very hard to believe that over the course of that 15 years we are actually going to have that 20 percent reduction. So if we assume that again, we are going to get in trouble. That puts us in a position where you realize there is not that much money there.

Lastly, and most importantly, these are projections, estimates. Now, we have to do projections and estimates. You have to sort of guess, if you will, at what your budgets are going to look like so you can plan for the future. That is acceptable, but I would not count our chickens before they hatch. Because that 15-year projection is based on 15 years of continued growth and low inflation. Now, granted the growth that is projected is lower than we have had in the last year or two, as we have had the long peacetime expansion, the longest that we have had in a while, but still there are times when revenues go down instead of up, when estimates get worse instead of better. I know this as every Member of this Chamber ought to know. Those times happened throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s. We had projected balanced budgets at, gosh, I do not know how many times throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but the numbers always came in worse than expected, many times far worse than expected, dramatically growing the deficit instead of reducing it.

So if we assume that this 15-year period is going to produce continued growth, continued low inflation, we are

asking for trouble. I would suggest that a more modest approach is at most let us assume that maybe half of that is going to happen and if the other half happens, fine, when it happens, then we can use it for tax cuts or needed spending, but let us not spend it before we get it.

And, fourth, the final point, we should not forget the \$5.6 trillion debt that we have hanging over us. It would be nice to use a lot of this money to pay down that debt, to get us back to the point where we can have the fiscal responsibility that we need in this country. We spend over \$200 billion, somewhere around \$220 billion a year, in interest on the debt. That is money that cannot go for any program, cannot go for any tax cut, it is merely servicing our debt. If we were to pay down that debt, we could reduce that amount and have even more money and a more fiscally responsible budget.

Let me suggest that now is the time to do this, at a time when we have between 4 and 6 percent growth depending on the quarter, at the time when we have virtually nonexistent inflation. These are unprecedented times, at least unprecedented in the last 40 or 50 years in this country, and if we do not seize this opportunity at a time when unemployment is 4.2 percent, to be fiscally responsible, we will never do it when times turn bad. Because when times turn bad is precisely when you need to spend more money on things like education and infrastructure, when you need to give tax cuts to help people who are struggling due to the tough economic times. Now is the time to be fiscally responsible.

I want to touch on one more point on that. We have recently heard a lot of talk about tax cuts. Truthfully there are not many politicians who do not like tax cuts. We would love to be able to give as many of them as possible and in as many places as possible, but only in my opinion if they do not jeopardize fiscal responsibility.

The plan that has been rolled out by the majority Republican Party in recent days calls for \$850 billion, or \$875 billion, depending on whose figures you believe, over the next 10 years. Right away, please note that they estimate over the next 10 years, whereas the surplus figures that have been thrown around in the newspapers estimate over 15 years. So over 15 years, that \$850 billion is even more. In fact, if you take that \$850 billion, put it over the 10 years like it is, then take our projected surpluses back over 10 years, and that is the chart that I have with me today, you will see that we have a figure here that shows that the combined surpluses over those two periods are somewhere around \$1 trillion.

If you then also add into it the fact that if you spend the \$850 billion or if you give it to tax cuts basically, you will not be able to pay down the debt

at all, you jack up your interest payments by almost \$200 billion and you completely exhaust this projected surplus in 10 years. So we better do absolutely as well every single year and we better be prepared to cut the budget 20 percent or we can forget about fiscal responsibility. The number is simply too high. Yes, we ought to do tax cuts. I completely support that. I completely agree with that. We ought to target it to the middle class, target it to the people who maybe have not necessarily benefited as much from the recent economic boon as others. But we should not exhaust the entire projected surplus on these tax cuts, putting ourselves in a position where we cannot even begin to pay down the debt and probably will not be able to have a balanced budget if the numbers come in worse than they are currently projected. That is not fiscally responsible.

Let me throw one other frightening statistic at you as we are looking at these happy numbers of the projected surpluses. We project out 15 years, which is an interesting time frame to pick particularly when you factor in positive economic projections, because it is right about at that time period, the year 2014, when the costs of Medicare and Social Security are really going to accelerate. If you project it out a few more years, you would see how much that starts to hurt us as the baby boom generation starts to retire in earnest. We are going to be in big trouble.

All of these factors and statistics need to be considered. The fact that half the money is in the Social Security trust fund, the fact that right at the end of our projections we get hit with a huge bill for Medicare and Social Security. These are things that mitigate how much money we have. My grave concern, and I have seen it already, and had people come up to me, program after program, tax cut after tax cut is thrown at us and everyone says, "Well, gosh, you ought to be able to do it. You've got this multi-trillion dollar surplus that everybody keeps talking about." I hope in my remarks I have explained a little bit tonight that we do not have that multi-trillion dollar surplus in the bank by any stretch of the imagination.

I really think that the single best thing this Chamber can do for the people of our country right now in these strong economic times is balance the budget and pay down the debt. Then if we hit tough economic times, we will have a little leeway to borrow some money, help prime the pump, help get the economy back going again, but not if we cannot do it now. If we cannot do it now in these prosperous times, we will never do it. And God help us if it gets to the point where actually the projections go down, if we experience a year of negative growth, which by the way does happen, if inflation ticks

back up closer to double digits than just one or two, then we will really be in a fix. Now is the time to prepare for the future.

I would like to close by just making one other point. This is tough. I recognize that. I am not going to stand here and say that fiscal responsibility is easy. Because we have a lot of needs in this country. I could tick off a dozen off the top of my head, defense spending, education spending, veterans, health care for seniors and children, environmental protection programs, and that is just a few. We also could have a tremendous need for a lot of tax cuts that would be tremendously helpful to the middle class and others. I know that. Every day in my office a number of people come in the door and request one of those programs. But the obligation and the responsibility of this Congress is to recognize that we are not the last people in this country who are going to need those things and if we spend all the money now, if we basically have no discipline and simply want to pass out the goodies to make as many people happy as is humanly possible, then 10, 20, 30 years from now our children, our grandchildren, those of us who are still around, are not going to have anything for these same programs. In the year 2020, 2050, they are going to need education and transportation and health care and defense spending every little bit as much as we need it now but they will not have it because we in our fiscally irresponsible way will have spent their money.

I grew up in the 1970s and the 1980s when prior Congresses were in essence spending all of my money. I did not much like it and I darn sure do not want to do it to future generations because I do not have the discipline to do what is right and what is best for this country and what is responsible.

Do not let rosy scenarios and pie in the sky numbers fool you about where the budget is going and what is going to happen. Demand fiscal responsibility from this Congress, demand that the budget gets balanced and we pay down the debt.

BLUE DOG VIEW OF FEDERAL BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HAYES). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) is recognized to control the remainder of the minority leader's time.

Mr. STENHOLM. I thank my colleague for requesting this hour this evening. I very much appreciate the opportunity to participate. I will assure the Speaker, I do not intend to take the full remaining part of the time tonight. If some other colleagues do show up, I will yield to them under the rule.

Let me sort of begin where the gentleman from Washington just ended and on the chart that he has in the well and point out, contrary to a lot of rhetoric in this body over the last few days,

there is no budget surplus this year. When we look at the year 2000, the off-budget surplus is \$5 billion projected. In the year 2001, it is \$24 billion projected. Therefore, I would hope that this body would resist the temptation that is prevalent today to talk in terms of an \$850 billion tax cut over the next 10 years when, according to all arithmetic today that is conservative, you will find that it will have to be done with borrowed money.

Now, the people that I represent do not get excited about a tax cut that is paid for with borrowed money. The first thing they assume is that if you borrow \$850 billion, the least you are going to pay for interest is about 5 percent, maybe 6 percent, because it is the government doing the borrowing, but then they understand that if that is done with borrowed money, there is a pretty good chance that the Federal Reserve is going to involve itself in our decisions.

I ask my colleagues tonight, what did the Federal Reserve do a couple of weeks ago? If memory serves me correctly, they increased interest rates by .25 percent. Why did the Federal Reserve and the wisdom of Alan Greenspan increase those interest rates? Because they were afraid the economy was about to start overheating, inflation was going to begin moving up and they wanted to nip it in the bud. Now, let us move ourselves back to the subject of tax cutting.

Why would we want a tax cut? Obviously because it is a politically popular thing to do. It makes good political rhetoric to say we are going to leave this money that has been accumulated by overtaxing the people and sending it back to you, but by the same breath, tax cuts stimulate the economy. Now, the problem that I have with this \$850 billion tax cut is that if on the one hand we are going to stimulate the economy and that stimulation of the economy is going to cause interest rates to go up, who is going to benefit best? I would submit to you tonight, the best tax cut that this Congress can give to all of the American people is to act fiscally responsible and to make certain that interest rates do not go up, in fact can come back down. That is something we had better think about, because we are not in control of the Federal Reserve and it is predictable based on what Chairman Greenspan has been saying what will happen if in fact the economy starts to overheat. But I go back to my first comment and point out again, there is no budget surplus.

□ 2145

Now I have a little further problem with this chart and all of these guesstimations because that is what they are.

I have been around here a few years, and I remember the debate in this body

not too many years ago in which we argued for hour after hour as to whether or not we could project 2 years, 3 years. Now all of a sudden we are accepting 15-year projections.

Now who among us can predict tomorrow, much less 15 years from today? Who among us can make these kind of decisions? And that is why the Blue Dogs, as we are affectionately called by some, in the budget proposal that we made earlier this year suggested, let us stop this business; yes, Mr. President, you, and to the leadership of this body, let us stop this business of taking 15-year numbers and acting like this \$700 billion is going to occur, and let us go back to 5-year numbers. Let us be conservative. Let us use 5-year numbers and let us not get carried away either with our desire for cutting taxes or our desire on the part of some for spending more money.

Now, again, let me repeat, there is no budget surplus. Most of these surpluses are dealing with Social Security. When you look at the off-budget or the on-budget surplus, you do have projected over the next 5 years 231 billion. What is it about this that should bother us when we take a 231 billion projected surplus over the next 5 years and suddenly use that as justification to have an \$850 billion tax cut?

And what ought to really bother this body is that when you look at that other number on this chart and you look at that 2414 number, that is when we have major problems dealing with Social Security. That is why another part of the Blue Dog budget has said: Let us devote 100 percent of the Social Security trust funds to solving the Social Security problem, and let us do this by paying down the debt. Let us pay down the debt with all of the Social Security trust funds. And we go further in saying let us take half of the non-Social Security surplus funds and pay down the debt with them. And then let us use the other half of that projected surplus to deal with the concept of tax cuts and the concept of increased funding, particularly for defense.

We find over the weekend the Pentagon began to raise concerns, and rightfully they did. Because when anyone looks at an \$850 billion tax cut over the next 10 years and then sees how it literally explodes about 2014, that becomes a problem for the military, it becomes a problem for our veterans programs, it becomes a problem for Medicare and Medicaid, but it even more seriously becomes a major problem for Social Security in 2014 because that is the year in which the Social Security trust funds begin not to, or the amount of taxes we are all paying on Social Security, begin not to cover the expected outgo of 2014.

In other words, the current situation we have in which Social Security is bringing in more than we are paying out begins to turn the other way as the

baby boom generation begins to retire. It ought to bother us, and it ought to say to this body and to those as we speak who are marking up this tax bill in extreme haste tonight: Now is the time for us not to be liberal with our thinking but to be conservative with our thinking and to realize that these are projections, and no one responsibly spends projections like it is real money.

Let me give my colleagues a few numbers in backing up. There is no budget surplus this year. For the first 8 months of fiscal year 1999, October through May, the Treasury reported a cumulative surplus of 40.7 billion, but it is composed of an off-budget surplus of 78.8 billion minus an on-budget surplus of 38.1.

There is no surplus, and yet we keep talking like there is one.

Let me read an editorial that was printed in today's San Angelo Standard Times. This is the way it went:

Washington's Budget Discussions Annoying. It is surreal to listen to Washington politicians arguing about how they ought to spend tax cuts on new programs, a projected budget surplus of \$5.9 trillion over the next 15 years. There are two niggling problems with such talk. One is that it is the wrong policy; the second is that not only is the amount of money being discussed little better than a blind guess, there is not even any assurance that there will be any surplus.

Consider that the new projections are \$1 trillion higher than the one made just this past February. Then consider that just 10 months ago the projected surplus was about one-third the numbers being tossed around now. And finally consider that just 18 months ago we were still talking about deficits. Can anyone really have enough confidence in such inexact calculations to make any plans that rely on their accuracy? Is it not obvious that if economic conditions can improve so rapidly, they can worsen just as rapidly? In fact, would not the smart money say that after 98 months of economic expansion, the longest during the peacetime in the Nation's history, a downturn is vastly more likely than 15 more years of uninterrupted growth and that future plans ought to reflect that probability?

The only good thing about the current budget blabbering is that the \$5.9 trillion figure is in the ball park of the amount owed on the national debt. Would it not be nice if that image, paying off the debt and not dollar signs begging to be given, this political barter, was the one that filled the politicians' heads? Would it not be nice if the trillions of dollars that have been and will be paid in interest on the debt could be used in some more productive way?

Making the current talk even more frustrating is that doing the right

thing is not even a difficult political choice. Polls have consistently shown that, given the options, Americans want Congress and the President to get the Nation's fiscal house in order before doing anything else with extra money.

Maybe the glorious projections being tossed around will turn out to be right or maybe the surplus will wind up being even twice as large, three times as large. That would be splendid. But it is foolish and irresponsible to base policy on dreams and wishes. Washington should take care of the priorities first, the money owed and the money that will be owed to future Social Security and Medicare recipients before committing any budget surplus elsewhere.

I could not have said it better myself, and as we go into tomorrow's continued markup in the Committee on Ways and Means and then next week having an \$850 billion tax cut on the floor, many of us are going to be reminding this body time and time again: If you really mean it when you say let us lock up the Social Security trust funds and not use them, if you really mean it when we talk about saving Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, if you really mean it, that we are going to keep our Nation's fiscal house in order. We must not succumb to the temptation to spend this surplus that may or may not even be realized for any purpose, and that includes the cutting of taxes. Because if we make that mistake, let us remember what happened the last time when we were not able to meet the spending needs in the 1980s. We borrowed \$3 trillion, almost \$4 trillion. We borrowed because we could not and would not make the difficult decisions right here in this body.

Again, my plea to the leadership of this House: Let us make the tough decisions first, let us settle the appropriations battle, let us acknowledge that if in fact we do have a need to build up our Nation's military, and we do, that there is no way on this earth we will be able to meet those numbers unless we deal with them responsibly in the budget by making that decision first. Let us acknowledge, all of us, that if you are concerned about Social Security, you cannot wink at 2014, you cannot say we are going to pass that on to the future congresses, we do not care about what is going to happen then, oh, we care, but we have got a plan, and the plan is yet to be materialized.

Why would it not be the most responsible thing for us to have a Social Security bill on the floor? Why would it not be the most responsible to have a bill for Medicare reform on the floor and have honest to goodness projections?

Why do we have our hospitals in town this week again concerned, as my hospitals are here, as I met with them, hospital administrators from about 20

in my district who are concerned about having to shut down because the budget decisions that were made in the 1997 balanced budget agreement went too far. And as I point out to them, it did not go near as far as some folks in this body would have liked to have seen. But why not have an open and honest debate about how we are going to deal with health care first? Why do we postpone that until after we have a vote on spending the entire surplus that may or may not be a real one?

These are some of the questions that I think we are going to have to ask and to answer over and over and over again.

Remember: When anyone talks about an \$852 billion surplus that is not Social Security; remember the highway bill that this body passed last year overwhelmingly? Look at the money that we voted to spend there that busted the hound out of the caps, but nobody saying, oh, we were not busting them because that was just part of the highway bill.

Look at this year, when we passed an airport bill not too many days ago and folks were standing up on the Committee on the Budget and saying we are busting the caps. No, we are not, because the total has not been busted yet, but that old bucket is filling up, and as it fills up, we are going to have some extremely interesting times, and I do not want, I hope, to be part of another Congress that for political reasons absolutely and totally disregards the future of our children and grandchildren. That is what we will do if we choose to have a tax cut for self-gratification today. We will be saying to our children and grandchildren we do not give a rip about you. Because the urgency is what the polls that we have to be looking at this year, and that is somebody somewhere is saying we need a tax cut.

I agree we need a tax cut, but not with borrowed money. That is the significant thing that we are going to have to somehow get over, hopefully to a majority of this body, that it does not make economic sense for us to waste this opportunity of fiscal responsibility, the first time in many, many years that we have got 2 years in a row in which when you take Social Security trust funds and off-budget, on-budget, all of this malarkey that we talk about here, that we do have a surplus. If we apply it to the debt and honestly use this opportunity to deal with the long-term problems of Social Security, we can do something that our grandchildren will look back on. And I happen to have two. I should say my wife, Cindy, and I happen to have two.

And I have resolved, and many people asked me why I have been so involved as I have in the Social Security question. I am not on the Committee on Ways and Means. I have been working with the gentleman from Arizona (Mr.

KOLBE), my colleague. We have bipartisan support now for a proposal on Social Security that does what we say it will do. And people say, well, what do we say it will do? It goes a long way towards solving the long-term problems of Social Security, better than any other proposal out there.

And people say, "Well, CHARLIE, why are you so involved in Social Security?"

And I say two reasons. Their names are Chase and Cole. It is mine and my wife's 4-year-old and 2-year-old grandsons. I do not want them to look back 65 years from today and say, if only my granddad would have done what in his heart he knew he should have done when he was in the Congress, we would not be in the mess we are in today.

□ 2200

We have a wonderful opportunity, if we can find the bipartisan political courage to deal conservatively with this surplus, to avoid the temptation that some have today to spend the money, whether it be on tax cuts or whether it be on spending for new programs.

Members will see me up at this mike and at other mikes and using every possible opportunity over the next several days to encourage a majority of my colleagues to take this surplus and pay down the debt. Listen to what the American people are telling us in district after district. They are saying, pay down the debt.

Any small business man or woman knows what happens to their business when they get more debt than they can pay back. When the interest cost becomes insurmountable, an insurmountable problem to them, they understand. Why is it so difficult for Members of Congress to understand?

That is the message the Blue Dogs will be bringing. That is the message I hope we will find bipartisan support for.

URGING HOUSE LEADERSHIP TO BRING MANAGED CARE REFORM TO THE FLOOR FOR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARY MILLER of California). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

COMMONSENSE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE BUDGET, THE BALANCED BUDGET ACT, AND MEDICARE

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, I find myself agreeing with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) on many of the issues that he has talked about regarding the budget. We are dealing primarily with what looks like a projected \$1 trillion surplus. That is assuming that we do not have a recession over the next 10 years, that the economy continues to be as strong, and

that we stay within budget caps related to the 1997 Balanced Budget Act.

But as my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Texas, rightly points out, I think we will need to go back and do some adjustments on the Balanced Budget Act, particularly as it relates to health care.

I have a lot of rural hospitals in my district, and there is a large teaching hospital in my State, just like there is in Texas, just like there is in every State in the country. Those rural hospitals and teaching hospitals over the next 4 or 5 years are going to lose millions and millions of dollars, and they will be in the red. We need to do something to adjust the payments, and we are not just talking about reductions in the rate of growth for their reimbursement, we are talking about a decrease, a real decrease and cuts from today.

For instance, the average rural hospital in the State of Iowa, my home State, currently gets paid by Medicare about \$1,200 for their costs for a patient who has a cataract operation. That is projected to decrease to about \$950 under the Balanced Budget Act. That is a real cut, that is not a reduction in the rate of growth. I could go through one procedure after another.

So when we look at the total budget, we have to also look at some adjustments that we are going to have to make in terms of Medicare. We are going to have to look at some real adjustments we are going to have to make in order to get our appropriations bills passed.

We cannot bring to the floor and expect it to pass a bill that would cut spending for the FBI by 20 percent. We cannot bring to the floor and expect the bill to pass if we would reduce funding for the immigration service, the INS, by 15 to 20 percent. That is a cut, not just reduce the rate of growth in their cost of living allowance. These are some real facts we are going to have to deal with.

Just like my friend, the gentleman from Texas, I think we ought to have a tax cut as well. But I cannot support an \$870 billion tax cut that we are talking about here in the House, not \$870 billion out of \$1 trillion in terms of the surplus.

I think it would be much more reasonable for us to sit down, reach across the aisle, reach down Pennsylvania Avenue, and come to an agreement. Let us do some adjustments on that Balanced Budget Act, maybe one-third of that surplus. Let us maybe do one-third of that surplus for a tax cut. That is still a hefty tax cut.

And let us do something that all of my constituents say we ought to do. For once, and it would probably be the first time in 50 or 60 years, let us actually reduce the Nation's debt. Let us do some real deficit reduction. I got elected in 1994 and took office in 1995. The

debt has increased every year since I have been in Congress. We have an opportunity this year to actually reduce the national debt.

What would be the benefit of that? Well, it would help reduce interest rates for everyone in the country. That makes a big difference if one is paying for a house or buying a car. By reducing that total debt that the country has, which is over \$5 trillion, by reducing that now, it gives us some cushion for what we will have to spend later on when the baby boomers retire.

Those are just some commonsense recommendations to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk primarily tonight about managed care reform. So I find myself standing on the floor yet again calling for comprehensive patient protection to be debated on the floor of the House of Representatives as soon as possible.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, do Members know the difference between a PPO, an HMO, and the PLO? At least, Mr. Speaker, with the PLO, you can negotiate.

Mr. Speaker, the clock continues to tick on our legislative calendar. So I ask, for the hundredth time, when are we going to debate comprehensive managed care legislation on the floor of the House of Representatives, and will the debate be fair? And when will the House Committee on Commerce mark up a managed care reform bill?

The decision was made to let the Committee on Education and the Workforce take up the comprehensive patient protection legislation first, but they are stalled. Nothing has happened in the Committee on Commerce, and nothing is happening in the other committees.

How can any of us say that we are making a strong effort to address managed care reforms when the Committee on Commerce, the committee of primary jurisdiction, has yet to hold a markup session on a managed care bill?

Before I go any further, I want to commend my colleagues, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) and the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. ROUKEMA), for their strong advocacy of strong patient protection legislation in the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

My colleagues have pointed out that the bills of the Committee on Education and the Workforce that were touted to be comprehensive managed care bills were, in reality, nothing more than an assurance of business as usual for the HMOs. Actually, they were not even business as usual, as those bills from the Committee on Education and the Workforce actually make it harder for patients to fight HMO abuses under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, ERISA.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken many times on this floor about how important it is for patients to have care that